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Two magazines from Vancouver polarise, it seems to me, the conditions under which literature exists in Canada today.

At one pole the critical quarterly Canadian Literature reflects the persistent urge towards a national culture which many Canadians feel. This journal was established in 1958 by the University of British Columbia. It was to be "devoted to the examination and appraisal of Canadian literature and its makers, past and present." The first issue was handsome, its contents impressive in range and quality. The lead articles, on D. C. Scott, "Ralph Connor," Gabrielle Roy and Northrop Frye, were written by obviously able critics. Included also was an article in French by Gerard Tougas on the state of French-Canadian letters. The issue was rounded out with shorter reviews of recent books in Canada and with a policy-making editorial. "Good writing, writing that says something fresh and valuable on literature in Canada is what we seek," claimed editor George Woodcock. "It can be in English or in French, and it need not necessarily be by Canadians..."

Readers who came across that first issue of Canadian Literature were delighted but dubious. How could such a first class journal survive in Canada? With University backing it might weather the financial storm but how long should the high quality of the contents be maintained? Were there enough people interested in Canadian letters to write, let alone read such articles issue after issue? How soon would the magazine run out of serious critical material and be forced into chauvinism and mediocrity.

The sceptics had reckoned without George Woodcock. Canadian-born world-traveller, linguist, scholar of European and English literature, critic and editor of international repute, writer of plays, biographies and travelogues, Woodcock brought to bear on his task a wealth of experience, a rare urbanity, editorial shrewdness and good taste. He soon won the confidence of critieal and historical writers across the country and as a result the journal, in seven years seems never to have suffered from a dearth of high-calibre contributions. Each succeeding issue has provided readers with interesting informative, varied and well-balanced critical fare. It is not surprising that the circulation is already 1400 copies. This is high for a journal of this kind in Canada but it will surely grow higher still, for readers interested in Canadian writing need see only one issue to become gratified subscribers to this magazine.

No. 25 of Canadian Literature, now available, features a symposium on the Montreal poet A. M. Klein and includes critical articles in French and in English and reviews of recent books. This journal sells for $1.25 a copy; subscriptions at $3.50 a year. Address: Circulation Department, Canadian Literature, University of British Columbia, Vancouver 8, B.C.

It should be noted that Canadian Literature is nationalistic in the best sense. The urbanity and critical objectivity of both the editor and his assistant Donald Stephens preclude chauvinism and sentimentality. The magazine proceeds quietly but firmly on the assumption that good writing in Canada deserves and rewards critical attention

With the evidence compiled in the twenty five issues of this journal there is no longer any excuse for serious readers to doubt this assumption.

Canadian Literature makes no special plea for writers "because they're Canadians." But it does stand as an implicit indictment of those readers who dismiss Canadian writing contemptuously out of sheer ignorance. There is still, in Canada, a surprising number of intelligent readers who pride themselves on a knowledge of the scholarly minutiae and socio-literary trivia of (say) early Seventeenth Century English literature but are smugly complacent about not being able to name three novelists in Twentieth Century Canada. Such readers often assert that if a book worth remembering comes out of Canada it will claim attention abroad and will then command some interest. Meanwhile, they say, they are not "literary nationalists." In fact, such readers typical of the colonial mind, still rampant in Canada refuse to consider anything Canadian seriously and on its own merit until it has been hailed by some "extra-national" critical pontiff.

The question Canadian cultural nationalism has too long been a criterion for both those who would coddle and those who would ignore Canadian writers. The great merit of a journal like Canadian Literature is that it steers a serene course between this "Scylla and Charybdis" of literature in Canada.

At the other pole stands the quarterly Prism International, advertising its policy in its title. Founded in 1959 by a group of Vancouver writers, its first editor was Jean de Bruyn. Its first title, simply Prism, was chosen to reflect the editorial polivy of eclecticism--a non partisan interest in good contemporary writing. A privately-financed quarterly, P Prism was devoted exclusively to creative writing. While hoping to serve as a much-needed outlet for writers in Western Canada, Prism's policy was broad. It did not consider itself as a regional nor even as a Canadian magazine. (Several members of its board were, in fact, Americans teaching at U.B.C). Its first issue included Easterners as well as Westerners and

some writers from the United States. As a further proof of its prismatic policy, the editors intended to publish many forms of writing, including plays, long poems and excerpts from novels. And finally, Prism's policy was to publish anyone who met their standards, old, young, established or not but the editors had a special interest in promoting new talent wherever they found it. (Hugh Hood's"Flying a Red Kite" and Margaret Laurence's medal-winning "Tomorrow-Tamer" were first published in early numbers of Prism).

After three years, the magazine ran into the inevitable financial difficulties, despite small assists from the Canada Council and the Koerner Foundation, Prism, by 1963 was ready to fold. The editorial board at this point appealed to poet Earle Birney, then on the staff of U.B.C., Birney persuaded the University authorities to subsidize the magazine for the next three years. Prism was thereupon attached to the Creative Writing program at U.B.C. and Earle Birney became editor. Under the new mandate Prism's format, never unattractive, was spruced up, given a stiff spine and a dramatic cover design. Its title was modified to Prism International and its policy of eclecticism, far from being abandoned, was broadened amazingly.

"Eclectic internationalism" is a concept which described accurately the point of view of Prism's new editor. Earle Birney's own poetry of recent years especially has reflected his increasing interest in the languages and cultures of the many countries in which he has travelled and lived. Birney's editorial associates share his enthusiasm for world-wide cultural exhhange. many of them, are specialists from various departments of the University such as Asian Studies or Romance Languages. They lend their linguistic talents to the task of translating for Prism the the submissions from

contemporary established writers in such far-flung ports as Nigeria, Pakistan, China and South America, Israel, Russia or Japan.

Prism International, using the photo offset process, publishes each poem in its own language whatever that may be, together with a translation into English. Thus the Canadian writer in the latest Prism finds his work juxtaposed with poems in Swedish, Italian, Bengali and even Gaelic.

The spectacle of Prism's pages these days may offer the reader an exotic thrillbut exoticism is not the editors'aim. They firmly believe that no linguistic or cultural barrier should be allowed to obscure the fact that literature is a Human activity the world over. And underlying Prism's function as a literary magazine is a deeply idealistic commitment to the promotion of international understanding.

Certainly something deeper and broader than the usual literary response is drawn from Prism's readers. One realization that Prism's pages force home on Canadians is that this is not a bilingual or a bicultural world--it is multi-lingual and multi-cultural. Prism plans to feature some French-Canadian writers soon but they will perhaps find themselves sandwiched between poems in the original by Mae-Tse Tung and some verses in Hindustani. The coming issue will carry poems by Ho Chi Minh and by an Israeli poet, now living in Montreal.

Prism's current Acting Editor in Chief is Jacob Zilber; formerly Fiction Editor. (Earle Birney is presently on the staff of Scarborough College, Toronto). Prism International sells for $1.00 a copy or $3.50 for an annual subscription. Address: Prism c/o Creative Writing, U.B.C., Vancouver 8, Canada.

That Prism International was born in Vancouver seems fitting to me. Vanvouver strikes me not as a "North American Frontier-town" as it has been

called recently by several of its sons, nor even less as a Canadian stronghold of Anglo-Saxons or "Britishers." I was prepared when I went out there for some ignorance of or resistance to the "Quebec Revolution," "The French Fact," BBiculturalism" and "Separatism." What I actually found was indifference. British Columbians, I'm sure, could produce as many separatists of their own brand as can Quebec. The province is rich, proud and strong. The sounds the rest of Canada makes are effectively muffled by the Rocky Mountains and all but lost in the vast "interior" of B.C. before any echoes reach the coast. Vancouver is Pacifically oriented and the most fruitful exchanges are made not with other Canadian provinces but with the American states on the West Coast.

Biculturalism means very little to Vancouverites because theirs is already multi-cultural society. One basic stratum is Indian, and though the Indians themselves are in a deplorable state, the artistic motifs of their colourful past permeate the work of many of Vancouver's painters and sculptors. B.C. also has a large Chinese population whose concentration in downtown Vancouver constitutes the second largest "Chinatown" on the continent. The Japanese add another distinctive cultural note: enthusiasm for contemporary Japanese art and decor is high throughout Vancouver. The city also boasts a German colony large enough to turn Robson Street into Robson Strasse," a center for German commercial establishments and eating-places. The Italian community is rapidly growing; and there is a distinct stratum of Hungarian intellectuals who after the Hungarian Revolution poured into Vancouver at the invitation of U.B.C. As a final touch, Vancouver is very susceptible to Far Eastern culture and devotes numerous societes and journals to "Asian Studies," "Pacific Affairs" and "Tibetan Refugees!"

I didn t hear much French spoken in Vancouver; but on the other hand there were not nearly as many British accents as I had expected. The secret power-structure may still be essentially Anglo-Saxon. (The "dead hand" of Victorian England is said to be responsible for some outmoded social customs and for the province's benighted liquor laws). But my main impression of Vancouver, after a stay of three months, is that it is a young, vigorous, "open" society, certainly cosmopolitan and more internationally inclined than any other city in Canada. If this be true, the emergence of Prism International in Vancouver is not surprising.

Thus we can see feflected in these two magazines the cultural dilemma in which Canadians find themselves. Both poles, the national and the international are attractives; both are dangerous. Perhaps finding out about ourselves and who we really are is important; but so is staying alive as human beings and to do that it would seem that international concern is more urgent. It is perhaps typically Canadian that we should be trying to do both. As Canadians we've had to practice tight-rope walking in so many spheres we ought to be good at it by now.

There are several other interesting West Coast magazines which I may discuss in another column. For now, some news and notes:

The Literary Review published quarterly by Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, New Jersey, devotes its latest issue to Canadian writings. The rich selection was made by Desmond Pacey. The editors claim that theirs is "the first American magazine devoting an entire issue to modern Canadian writing in all its major forms." Single copies sell at $1.50.

The Tamarack Review is to have a full-time salaried business manager in the person of John Robert Colombo. Mr. Colombo's chief objective will be "to find a means of securing permanent financial support for the magazine." Tamarack's latest issue, by the way carries two chapters from the novel,

"In Praise of Older Women" by Stephen Vizinczey, once editor of the glorious (now defunct) Enchange magazine, and a long poem by Raymond Souster on John Sutherland, once editor of First Statement and Northern Review.

Montreal has another new little magazine Boreal is subtitled "Poesia Espanola en el Canada" and is surely the first Spanish Poetry magazine in Canada. Its editor is Manuel Betanzos Santos. Subscription $1.00 Address: 1535 Bernard Ave., W., Apt. 36, Outremont, Quebec, Canada.

Volume 63 - a biannual of poetry (Summer 1965 Number 3) published by the Students Board of Publications, the University of Waterloo is now available at .75 a copy. Though apparently undergraduate in origin, Volume 63 is open to everyone, or so it appears. This issue includes some poems by a clever new satirist Joan Finnigan at her best (making literary icicles with which to puncture especially the ladies she meets at tea-parties or cocktail get-togethers). Joan Finnigan has recently published "A Dream of Lilies" (Fiddehead Press).

The Journal of Commonwealth Literature has recently been established at the University of Leeds. This critical review, edited by Arthur Ravenscroft, reflects the growing interest in Commonwealth Studies. It is designed to cover "the whole range of writing in English throughout the Commonwealth, with the exception of writing in Britain...." It is thus the first attempt to form a link between writers and scholars who share a common literary tradition (English) and who are now occupied in the development of writing in their own countries. Subscription rates are 2 pounds 2 shillings for four issues. Address: Heinemann Educational Books Lts., 48 Charles Street, Mayfair, London W 1.